

Winery Starts Marketing Thanks to USDA Rural Development



Outline of Need: Stonebridge Vineyards Inc. is an established eight-acre vineyard in Pawnee City, NE owned by Mike and Sharon Schilling. The Schillings had long dreamed of opening their own winery as a means of marketing their grape production and increasing tourism in their rural hometown. However, the financial obstacles involved with developing and marketing a successful winery business were overwhelming to the Schillings and thus they sought out assistance from USDA Rural Development. Working capital funds were needed to execute their business plan and to introduce their unique winery and wine products to the marketplace.

How Rural Development Helped: Rural Development provided a \$92,329 Value-Added Producer Grant targeted for marketing to draw guests to the winery, for advertising winery events and the labeling of wines. Salaries of key winery personnel would also be paid from the grant.



The Results:

SchillingBridge Winery has become an operational winery, producing high quality award winning wines. The winery offers white, red, and a Nebraska Table wine named "Chef Choice". The label graphics and copy entice the consumer to not only enjoy wine from

a glass, but to use it in cooking, thus adding another value-added element to the grapes. The Schillings also chose to market their vineyard's unique history through their label design and wine names.

The winery has welcomed approximately 6,200 visitors since opening in November of 2005.



Being able to concentrate on marketing efforts were paramount to the winery's early success. Three full time and four part time jobs have been created in this rural area as a result of the new winery business. Businesses within the community have also realized increased revenue due to the traffic brought in from the winery.

SchillingBridge, with its award winning wines and more than 50 events has turned this once non-profitable row crop farm into a venture whose value-added component has helped them realize their annual sales goals within the first 6 months of operation.